



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA Metropolitan Planning Organization

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

**Minutes of June 19, 2002
2:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC
County Commissioners' Briefing Room (Blue Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse**

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair/GDOT	Jeff Sovich	GDOT
Tyler Meyer	GDOT	Libby James	GTA
S. Frank Wyatt	Engineering & Inspections	Les Eger	Guilford County
Craig McKinney	GDOT	Mike Mills	NCDOT
Kelly Becker	NCDOT Traffic Engineer	Patty Eason	NCDOT – Div. 7
Bruce Adams	City of Greensboro/GTA	Eddie McFalls	Earth Tech, Inc.
Sean Phillips	NCDOT Traffic Engineer	Missy Dickens	NCDOT Project Dev.
Jerry Dudeck	NCDOT Statewide Planning	Scott Rhine	PART
Julian Benjamin	NC A&T State University		
James Upchurch	NCDOT Statewide Planning		

Jim Westmoreland called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes of April 17, 2002

Frank Wyatt moved for the approval of the April 17, 2002 minutes. Scott Rhine seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Amend Public Transportation Element of 2002 –2008 MTIP

Jeff Sovich informed the Committee that this amendment is intended to reprogram the total 5307 funds for GTA. The amendment shifts all 5307 funds that were previously programmed for planning and capital expenses into operating expenses. The shift is needed greater operating expenses than were originally anticipated. The operating expenses, as estimated by the contractor and as initially shown in GTA's budget, were lower than the amount actually billed.

He advised that the NCDOT has also allocated an additional \$2.2 million in 5307 funds for GTA, allowing the purchase of ten replacement vans and 10 replacement buses. These were two previously unfunded projects. The requested action is to recommend approval by the TAC.

Jim Westmoreland asked for a motion to recommend approval of the amendment to the public transportation element of 2002-2008 MTIP to the TAC. A motion made by Scott Rhine and seconded by Frank Wyatt, was unanimously approved.

3. Amend Highway Element of 2002 – 2008 MTIP

Jeff Sovich advised the Committee that NCDOT requested that the MTIP be amended to add the Traffic System Operations Program, project R-4701. After a review study by NCDOT staff, it was determined that new funding has not been made available for signal system maintenance for fifteen years.

This project was approved at the March Board of Transportation meeting, and would fund signal system maintenance statewide. It establishes performance standards, as well as preventive maintenance goals and includes flexibility for introducing new technologies as they arise. It programs a total of \$132 million into the TIP over the next eight fiscal years with \$85.8 million of that total available during the 2002-2008 MTIP. Greensboro's allocation is not yet known.

Jim Westmoreland commented that Troy Peoples, State Traffic Engineer, was involved in looking at schedules C and D, which are maintenance reimbursement schedules for state traffic signals inside municipalities. This item sets into place the funding mechanism to have the divisions work directly with the municipalities, either to establish local agreements for signal system maintenance, or to revise schedules C and D to put that into motion.

Jim Westmoreland asked for a motion to amend the highway element of the 2002-2008 MTIP. Frank Wyatt moved to amend the highway element. Scott Rhine seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

4. Review Job Access and Reverse Commute Grant Application

Jeff Sovich advised the Committee that the JARC program funds several projects that provide reliable employment transportation for individuals who otherwise might not have the opportunity. GTA's proposal expands the Career Express shuttle service, which provides job transportation to the airport area. The expansion that GTA is proposing would add weekend service to the Career Express shuttle. Bruce Adams advised that the current monthly level of ridership is 3,800. The total project cost for the grant is \$301,342, and GTA is required to match 50% of that amount. The duration of the grant is two years.

Jim Westmoreland asked for a motion to recommend that the TAC endorse the grant application. Scott Rhine moved for recommendation to the TAC. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Jim Westmoreland also commented that preliminary discussions have been made with PART concerning coordinating efforts for the start of regional bus service in the fall.

5. Review Enhancement Project Applications

Tyler Meyer informed the Committee that the NCDOT administers the enhancement projects as a competitive grant program. These federally funded grants are intended to cover non-traditional projects such as bike paths, sidewalks, scenic beautification, and historic depot renovations. Projects from the MPO area that are eligible for the grant award must receive the endorsement of the MPO in order to be considered for funding.

The first project, requested and sponsored by the Town of Oak Ridge, will landscape the traffic islands at the intersection of NC 68 and 150. The requested amount is \$9,200, which is 80% of the total project cost.

The second project, requested and sponsored by the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department, supports Phase I of the Southeast Pedestrian Connector. This facility will be a combination sidewalk and off-road trail connecting neighborhoods, school, parks, and other pedestrian destinations. The cost of this project is \$66,000. The department is requesting 80% of the total cost.

The third project requested by Greensboro Department of Transportation is to construct six and a half miles of transit-oriented sidewalks on major roadways around the city. Projects that are included are sidewalks along West Market Street and Guilford College Road. The total cost of this set of projects is \$679,000. The Greensboro Department of Transportation is requesting a 50% match at \$339,000. The goal is to leverage federal funds to support the project.

Jim Westmoreland asked why a 50% local share was requested. Tyler Meyer responded that the overall funding amount is constrained and felt that was a more realistic number to achieve. Jim Westmoreland asked if there was an issue with projects if a certain threshold was met on a project. Tyler Meyer said, "No," but this year funding ability for the enhancement program is constrained. Tyler Meyer informed the Committee that the main concern is to endorse the project and then the match percentage can be adjusted at a later time. Jim Westmoreland recommended that the percentage be changed to 80%, which would allow the Committee to use funds for other needs.

Jim Westmoreland asked for a motion to recommend that the TAC endorse the applications as revised. Frank Wyatt moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Scott Rhine seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Business Items

1. High Point Road Project Update

Eddie McFalls, of Earth Tech, Inc. advised the Committee that when completed, project U-2412 would provide a multi-lane facility from High Point into Greensboro. The project begins in High Point on Greensboro Road. He advised that Alternative 2 would most likely be the preferred alternative. The final decision on which alternative will be used, will be made after a public hearing in the fall.

McFalls advised that Alternative 2 would widen High Point Road to a four-lane divided facility from the beginning of the project to west of Hardy Road. Section C is the area of the project within Greensboro. The entire project is estimated to cost \$124 million, and is anticipated to relocate 76 residences and 32 businesses.

He also advised the reason that Alternative 2 would be chosen is due to the fact that the Jefferson Pilot property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This status provides protection under Section 4F of the USDOT Act, which requires that it must be avoided unless there are no other feasible alternatives. Alternative 2 avoids impact to this historic property and the Sedgefield Historic District. This project will also have to meet the current watershed protection regulations, but any variance that may be needed cannot be requested until the final alternative has been selected.

He also informed the Committee that for Section C, which extends from Guilford College Road to Hilltop/Groometown Road, right-of-way acquisition is scheduled to begin in 2005 with construction starting in 2008. Also the section that includes the interchange with the Greensboro Urban Loop is scheduled to have right-of-way acquisition completed in 2005 and begin construction in 2007. Jim Westmoreland asked which project, the Greensboro Urban Loop or the High Point Road widening, would include constructing the interchange. Mike Mills said that the interchange would not be part of the Loop project.

The re-evaluations of the environmental studies for this project should be complete this summer with the public hearing being held in the fall. Missy Dickens commented that the re-evaluations indicate that nothing has significantly changed since the Draft EIS was written in the early '90s.

2. Highway Trust Funds, TEA-21, and RABA Update

Jeff Sovich informed the Committee that the Highway Trust Fund Study Commission was established last September by the state legislature to review issues related to transportation funding sources in the state. Their authorization expired in April before the commission had a chance to meet. There is a provision in the 2002 budget legislation to reauthorize the commission. The Board of Transportation adopted a resolution on May 2nd that requests the Trust Fund Study Commission to make a recommendation as quickly as possible for flexibility and use of highway trust funds.

Jim Westmoreland asked if this proposal would extend eligibility for Highway Trust Funds to additional projects. This is the case, but perhaps in a more limited fashion than the MPO would prefer. Tyler Meyer advised that the proposed legislation would also solve the current federal aid matching fund dilemma. Mike Mills advised that the Board has forwarded its request to the legislature, but no response has been received at this time. Mike Mills noted that the Governor's proposed appropriation from the Highway Trust Fund budget to the state's general fund is now approximately \$210 million. Missy Dickens advised that according to the *News & Observer* the Senate's budget proposes taking \$250 million from the trust fund, plus an additional \$125 million one time to be paid back over five years.

Jeff Sovich advised the Committee that each year the Revenue Aligned Budget Authority sets the total amount of federal transportation funding based on the revenues that will be received during that year for transportation. RABA is expected to cut \$192 million out of the state's federal transportation funding for the fiscal year 2003. However, recently revised estimates of transportation revenues indicate that the TEA-21 guaranteed funding level could be met or exceeded with the revenue that had been received so far. The Highway Funding Restoration Act which is being considered by congress would reinstate approximately \$108 million to the state's federal transportation funding for fiscal year 2003.

TEA-21 will expire on September 30th of 2003. Accordingly, the process is already underway to reauthorize federal transportation legislation. Interest groups and legislators will be introducing proposals during this summer and fall. In January, the Bush administration will be unveiling its proposal. As the process goes on, TEA-21 may need to be extended, just as ISTEA was while TEA-21

was being prepared. The reauthorization is important because this will set the level of highway and transit funding throughout the country and North Carolina for the next six-year period and will establish the rules and parameters in which our MPO will conduct its planning activities.

The key issues that will be considered by the legislature in this reauthorization process are: synchronization between the conformity process and the long range planning process; mechanisms for reducing volatility of annual funding levels caused by RABA; and establishing direct sub-allocations of CMAQ funds to MPOs that are air quality non-attainment areas.

Julian Benjamin asked how the Committee was adjusting to funds not increasing as they have in the past and how it affects its plans. Jim Westmoreland noted that staff analysis of this issue is ongoing. Tyler Meyer added that the election in the fall could affect TEA-3. Which party gains control of the House and Senate, and which members are appointed as heads of various committees will have a significant impact on the character of the law that is passed.

3. TMA Designation Issues

Tyler Meyer observed that Census 2000 results show that the Greensboro Urbanized Area population increased 45% (to 267,000) between 1990 and 2000, while total land area within the UZA increased 93% to 158 square miles. He advised that Greensboro has a larger share of dense urban census blocks compared to Winston-Salem and Asheville. He commented that Greensboro has done the best job of the three in terms of maintaining a compact development pattern, which land-use planners would consider favorable. But in terms of funding allocations, this achievement doesn't work to our advantage. Practically speaking, more of Greensboro's peripheral, low density development is outside of its Urbanized Area, whereas a greater prevalence of low-density leap-frog development has been included within the Urbanized Areas of other MPOs such as Winston-Salem and Asheville.

Because Greensboro now has a UZA population of over 200,000, it is designated as a Transportation Management Area by the USDOT. This designation raises a series of challenges, but also provides opportunities for the MPO. The annual self-certification of MPO performance will be supplemented by a triennial certification review, in which teams of FHWA and FTA reviewers will meet with TCC and TAC members, examine records, hold a public meeting, and take other steps as warranted to determine whether the planning process meets applicable requirements.

Another consequence of TMA designation is that Greensboro will be required to develop a Congestion Management System. The CMS is a tool used to study traffic congestion on area roadways to evaluate alternative strategies for reducing congestion and to provide a justification for including new roadway capacity projects in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

TMA status also brings changes for transit planning functions. GTA will have a direct relationship with the FTA, and funds will be limited as to the types of expenses they may be used for. Greensboro will also no longer be eligible for state discretionary fund allocations.

As a TMA, the Greensboro MPO also has the opportunity to direct the allocation of STP-DA funds apportioned to the area. Discussions are ongoing with the NCDOT regarding the implications STP-DA authority; further information will be provided as it becomes available.

Taken as a whole, TMA designation raises the standards the MPO must meet, but at the same time, it positions Greensboro to have a more influential role in the transportation planning process.

Update on Draft 2004-2010 MTIP

Tyler Meyer advised that the draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program has been released. The final state TIP will be adopted next summer. The Highway Trust Fund provides approximately 50% of programmed funds for the Greensboro area, while Federal Aid funds provide the bulk of the other 50%. The Surface Transportation Program and National Highway System programs make up the majority of programmed federal aid funds. Construction has the largest share of the total budget at nearly 80%, while right-of-way acquisition and operations account for roughly 15% and 5% respectively. Excluding post-years, Greensboro's overall TIP funding has increased from \$551 million under the 2002-2008 MTIP to \$873 million under the 2004-2010 MTIP. This funding increase appears to be primarily related to Highway Trust Fund projects, including the acceleration of the Eastern Urban Loop and the advancement of the NC 68/US 220 Connector into the program for right-of-way acquisition. Federal-aid funds have increased 30% since the last TIP.

He advised the Committee of the projects in the TIP. Three major new projects have been added: the Battleground Rail Trail, funded through discretionary enhancement funds by the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Division; the resurfacing project on US 29 between Sixteenth Street and the Rockingham County Line; and the construction of five park and ride lots to support regional transit service.

The Greensboro Eastern Urban Loop has been accelerated, and will now be constructed within the TIP period, with construction starting in 2008 between US 70 and US 29 and in 2009 between US 29 and Lawndale Drive.

The timeframes of several projects in the TIP have been delayed due to various project development setbacks, while other projects have been intentionally pushed back to facilitate balancing of available funds. Jim Westmoreland asked which projects had been delayed due to internal project and scheduling issues versus funding issues. Meyer advised that more detail on this issue would be presented during the TAC meeting.

Meyer also informed the Committee that none of the roadway projects from the priority needs list had been added to the TIP. Only public transportation projects and the Battleground Rail Trail have been added to the draft TIP so far. The signal system replacement project feasibility study, which has already been completed is still listed in the draft TIP as being in progress.

5. Other Strategic Reports

The US 29 interchange study has been included in the TIP and a funding arrangement has been reached with the NCDOT to split the cost evenly between Greensboro and the state. The Pegg to Thatcher feasibility study is also included in the TIP. That study is going to be conducted by the NCDOT and will be completed by the end of the year.

Julian Benjamin advised that the next installment on the TEA-21 allocation for the transportation institute is due in September and would like to discuss ways for the MPO and the Institute to collaborate on projects in the future. It was agreed to hold a discussion between MPO/GDOT staff and Dr. Benjamin at a later date.

The TCC adjourned at 2:57 p.m.